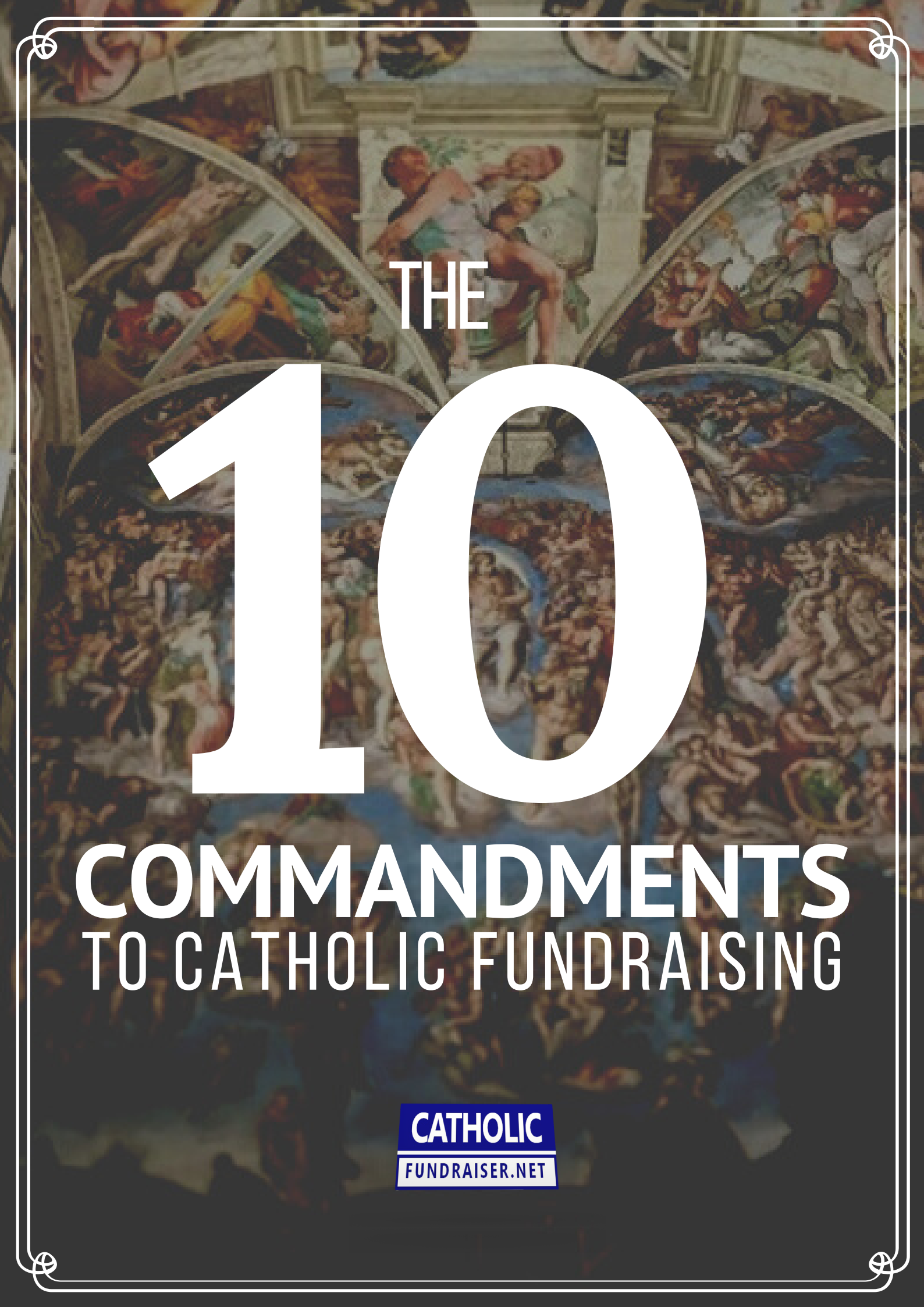

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS TO CATHOLIC FUNDRAISING

CATHOLIC FUNDRAISER.NET

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10 PRACTICAL STEPS EVERY CATHOLIC SHOULD FOLLOW TO ATTRACT DONORS, RAISE FUNDS, AND MOVE THEIR MISSION FORWARD

by Brice Sokolowski
Founder of CatholicFundraiser.net

Catholic Fundraiser Guide: How to Fundraise in 10 Steps
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“Human virtues acquired by education, by deliberate acts and by a perseverance ever-renewed in repeated efforts, are purified and elevated by divine grace.” - CCC 1810

INTRODUCTION

Most people have no idea about what the job of a fundraiser entails. If you ask the average person, “what does a fundraiser do?’, you will get the response: “they raise funds.” If you ask, “how does a fundraiser raise funds?”, the answer will be, “they ask people for money.” If you dig deeper and ask, “how do they ask people for money?”, you will likely get a blank stare.

So how does a fundraiser fundraise? When I first got started, I was told to identify people (also called prospects), contact them to arrange a meeting and then, at the meeting, I would ask them for money. A straightforward method, no?

In reality, I just ended up having a lot of uncomfortable conversations. Sometimes the “prospect” had no money to give. Worse yet, their spouse had just passed away. Talk about an awkward moment! Other times, I found myself in colourful, even hostile interchanges. I would ask myself “how on earth did this person even get on the prospect list?”

It seemed that for all the positive meetings I conducted, there were just as many negative ones which were exhausting. How could I find a way to ask the right people, for the right amount of money, at just the right moment?

Five years later, I have refined how I fundraise. Here are the ten tasks which I carry out weekly which help me raise funds better.

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STEP 1: PRAY

Fundraising requires a consistent prayer life because the work of asking for money can be a particularly challenging one.

We face hurdles each day and, as smart as we think we are, sometimes the best way to move forward is to take a step back, pray, and discover where God is leading us. I recommend that you and the organization you fundraise for have a habitual prayer life.

Pray together, go to Mass together, and attend group retreats on a regular basis. It can be quite easy to park your prayer life to the side, especially when things become hectic. It is, however, during the busiest times when we need to rely on God the most.

Following the Divine Office is a wonderful way for you to stay in rhythm, working together as a team. Communal prayer is a powerful means of keeping things simple and staying focused. When everyone is working on their tasks and moving in different directions, prayer can keep you all on the same track.

When fundraising does get challenging, and it frequently will, just remember that you are not alone because, with the help of Our Lord, anything is possible.

Last, I also recommend the guidance of a spiritual director.

EXERCISE 1: Find a prayer which you can habitually do each day. This could be mental prayer, vocal prayer, silent prayer, contemplation.

EXERCISE 2: Find a prayer which you can do as a team. This could be a rosary, a novena, Mass or adoration.

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STEP 2: THANK PEOPLE

Gratitude is powerful and transformational. Most often, unfortunately, the only thank-you a donor receives from most Catholic organizations is immediately after a donation. Come Christmas time; it's back to requests for money.

I recommend that you consider paralleling feasts days (such as Easter and Christmas) with thank-yous. If you are taking the time to thank God for these moments, it would be safe to assume that you should do the same with the people around you.

Gratitude is a wonderful way of communicating with people. My recommendation is to do it and do it often.

You will find people are touched by your generous approach and want to reciprocate.

EXERCISE: Outline a communications timeline for the year to make sure you are thanking people often enough.

Use this article to dive deeper into the world of fundraising, all from the lens of Pope Benedict XVI
https://catholicfundraiser.net/pope-benedict-xvi-fundraise/

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STEP 3: CONNECT WITH PEOPLE

How much you fundraise is proportional to the number of people you meet. Therefore, go out and meet people. To achieve maximum results, and reduce stress levels, be strategic with whom you meet. When you host or attend events, keep track of whom you meet and the conversations you have with people. Your goal is to identify people who resonate with your message and mission. Not all people will, and that is fine, but do be on the lookout for those who are.

I want to make something clear before we continue. Connecting and meeting people doesn't mean asking them for a donation each time. Not only will you drain yourself by asking people each time you are in a room with them, but you'll also likely turn people away. They'll remember that if you invite them somewhere, you just want to get money from them. Worse, they'll tell people about your method of inviting people simply to get a donation.

Instead, invite people to learn who they are and ask them to share in the good news about your work and aspirations. You will plant many more seeds for growing your organization by doing so. Positive and inspirational conversations don't guarantee that a person will donate. However, that's not the immediate goal. Connecting with people is the goal.

Remember that discussions always indicate who could be interested in supporting you in the future. Why? If someone praises your work and thinks you're making a difference, it means the person has recognised the value you provide, and value is not something you can make someone have. They make that choice for themselves. And when this happens, you are in a much better position to ask for financial support. A few weeks after meeting a person, you can contact them again to give an update about what you discussed. They'll appreciate that you haven't forgotten about them and have taken the time to contact them directly.

As you connect with more and more people, learning who they are, what inspires them, and who values your work, you will identify more and more potential donors. This is how you increase the number of donors to your organization.

EXERCISE: Go out and meet people.

List the five events you will attend this month to meet people.

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STEP 4: MAKE A DREAM LIST

I developed a way to specialize my fundraising that focused on the mission rather than on a donation type. Contrary to the way fundraisers usually compartmentalise themselves, I don't limit myself to one type of support: financial.

My Dream List divides into six categories, each of which represents an important factor of my mission. I explain what the six categories are below, but, in short, each contains the names of people who can move my mission to the next level.

Each person on my list is, in fact, so influential that I would still see tremendous results, even if I could only attract five of them.

The six Dream List categories are:

1. Spiritual Leaders – Prayer is the fundamental driver for everything your organization thinks, says and does. As a result, you should identify the individuals or groups who can pray for your work. I recommend you develop personal relationships with them.

2. Specialists – These experts have the personal experience of overcoming obstacles and finding the necessary resources. Fundraising is not just about finding money. It's about connecting with the right people who can lead you in the right direction with the right tools, people, and ideas.

3. Connectors – Connectors have relationships with other individuals and groups that you'd like to get to meet and know (e.g. other people on your Dream List). Engaging with connectors requires a high level of care and attentiveness because you never know who knows who.

4. Volunteers – You are dependent on a core group of people who are willing to go the extra mile for you. They may not have the same funds or connections as other people, but what they do have are time and resources (e.g. venues, cars, material, facilities) which they can generously share with you.

Be kind with your volunteers and look after them. They will greatly appreciate your sincerity and attention.

5. Significant Donors – Money provides fuel for your Catholic organization, but only when it's balanced with the other four categories that I've listed. When drawing

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up your list of significant donors, identify those you wish to develop a relationship with because they can provide substantial financial support to move you forward. You can include individuals, organizations, trusts or institutions.

6. Faithful Supporters – This category is different from the others because rather than listing names of individuals, you identify who your ideal supporter is. If you look at your current donors, you will find common interests and characteristics.

By determining your ideal faithful supporter, you can focus on how to find more of them.

EXERCISE: Make a Dream List

Use my article on Dream Lists to help you accomplish this:
http://catholicfundraiser.net/dream-lists/

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STEP 5: 1-TO-1 MEETINGS

It's important to remember that every donation you receive comes from the hands of a person. Donations are a "people transaction". People give because of the personal connection they've made with you.

Therefore, spend time making as many personal connections as possible. This may sound like a lengthy process but, trust me, spending quality time with people (especially one-to-one) is the best way to lay the path open for your next big donation.

The more time you spend on making connections with people, the higher your retention rate will be. Retention means retaining (keeping) a donor for the long-term.

The quickest way to increase your overall fundraising is by keeping your current donors while bringing on board new ones. If you are not keeping your current donors, and just looking for new donors, you'll be struggling to grow.

EXERCISE: Organize five 1-to-1 meetings for the next 2 weeks. Then, see if you can organize another five or more. Find your 'threshold' for how many people you can meet per week. Beware, it can be exhausting, so find a balance.

List the five events you will attend this month to meet people.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

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STEP 6: INCREASE YOUR COMMUNITY

In his 1976 Apostolic Exhortation 'Evangelization in the Modern World', Pope Paul VI points out that: *"The evangelical message should reach vast numbers of people, but with the capacity of piercing the conscience of each."*

Paul VI understood that no matter how many people are in your audience, you must always focus on telling your story. I find it incredible that his words, written 40 years ago, speak to the power of social media today. He understood its potential to spread the Good News. In light of Pope Paul VI's wisdom, here are three easy steps to increase your donor base.

You can do this in three simple steps:

1. Clarify your message
2. Share your message
3. Amplify your message

You can increase your community by leveraging technology. Get your message out there and attract people's attention.

Again, the focus is individual connections, not donations. Devoted followers have the highest probability of becoming long-term, dedicated donors.

EXERCISE: Follow the three steps and leverage every medium possible (email, social media, website, events, friends, etc) to get your message out.

I recommend referencing this article to help you complete this exercise:
https://catholicfundraiser.net/fundraising-problems-debunked/

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STEP 7: CLEAN YOUR CONTACT DATABASE

I used to dread doing this, but over the years, I've learned to enjoy it because I see how important it is to have people's details entered correctly.

Names mistyped and misspelt should be continuously weeded out from your records. Errors may be present in other organizations but not yours. This may sound like a burden and trivial, but it's much easier if you clean your records frequently than trying to do all at once.

And yes, this task sounds boring because it is boring. However, a tedious job can be made fun if you make a simple game of it. Each time you fix an error, celebrate!

You don't require an expensive or bespoke software to manage content. If anything, a simple Excel spreadsheet or Google workbook will do.

If you are just starting out or have less than 200 donors, I recommend using Microsoft Excel or Google spreadsheets. Spend the time necessary to watch tutorials on YouTube and become comfortable with the software.

If you work for a larger organization or want a holistic solution, I suggest software that the professional world uses, rather than software designed specifically for the charity sector. Many charities are using Salesforce which offers free licenses to charities.

I recommend choosing private sector software rather than charity focused software because I have worked in both sectors, and the level of simplicity and efficiency with professional software is exponentially greater than software designed for the charity sector.

EXERCISE: Spend between 30 minutes and one hour reviewing and cleaning the names and contact information in your database. Even better, put a recurring calendar event for completing this task each week.

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STEP 8: DISTRIBUTE FREE CONTENT

Saint Paul reminds us "it is more blessed to give than to receive," quoting Our Lord Jesus. Saint Francis of Assisi says "for it is in giving that we receive." Today, we use the phrase "pay it forward".

Fundraisers most commonly direct these adages at donors. I challenge you, however, to flip them around. Before asking what people can give you, think about how your organization gives to others.

If you are already reaching out, for example by offering free information booklets, I recommend raising your standard. Why not ask your people which new resources would benefit them most?

They will recognize your organization as one which gives before it asks. As a result, Catholics will be more open to donating. You will also spend less on attracting new donors because people will already be engaged and eager to give.

EXERCISE: Create content that you can offer people for free and distribute it.

Offer short guides, training booklets, fact sheets on key topics that can be read quickly and passed around to friends and family. Provide accessible information that keeps them engaged with you.

I recommend referencing this article on how Saint Paul would write an appeal letter: https://catholicfundraiser.net/saint-paul-appeal-fundraising/

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STEP 9: ATTEND OTHER PEOPLE'S EVENTS

Don't stay enclosed in your silo, focusing solely on your work. Instead, reach out and constantly connect with people at their events. Also, be the connector for individuals and groups in your area of work. I recommend that you know every key person in your field of work. Become yourself the key influencer.

As a result, people will engage with you because you seem to be (and are!) at the centre of everything. All roads pass through you.

More so, you are happy to make introductions for people. You don't keep contacts a secret or control relationships. Rather, you freely share who you know. Today, it's only a matter of time when someone connects with another person. You might as well make it easier and speed the process up.

Remember, we are made to connect with one another. We are not made to have a list of contacts in our phones which we guard for ourselves. Share.

By helping others connect, they will stay in touch with you and share their contacts. This, as a result, will increase the number of people engaging with you and therefore increase your number of donors.

EXERCISE: Attend a conference, seminar or event that is focused on your organization's kind of work. Connect with people at the venue and write down the key takeaways from the event. Share with the people whom you meet what you do.

Also, write a brief to share with your team, donors and followers.

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STEP 10: ASK PEOPLE FOR DONATIONS

We wouldn't be fundraisers if we didn't ask. Here are the three key steps to follow when asking for donations.

1. Understand why your donors currently give. This helps you build confidence in yourself and define the key points to communicate with potential donors.
2. Build relationships with people, identifying those who might want to give.
3. Ask for donations from people whom you know well.

A short note on how to ask someone for money. You can never control how much money someone gives because each donation is the result of their decision to give. This personal and private decision is something you cannot control, but what you can control, more or less, is the relationship between you and the person.

I recommend that your vocabulary is focused on building solid, authentic and personal relationships. When you focus your language on relationships rather than financial demands or outcomes, you stay rooted in your mission. And the deeper these roots are, the more opportunities will come your way to building relationships with people who will want to donate.

Donors are looking for Catholic organizations which authentically communicate with them. You can achieve this by using words that demonstrate connections and impact, rather than 'neediness'.

Joyously use words like "want", "ask", "would like", "enjoy", "join", "connect", "engage" to improve your fundraising and attract more donors.

Shift from using "needing" terms to "wanting". This small adjustment will make people see you in a different light. Rather than someone who is focused on money and dependent on donations, you are focused on relationships and moving forward with those around you.

EXERCISE: Follow the three steps and keep track of the people whom you have met. Be confident when asking for donations.

List the names of ten people whom you think could donate. First, take time to meet with them 1-to-1 and build a relationship. Confirm if they could be a possible donor. There is no exact science. I use my intuition. Sometimes I am right, and sometimes I am wrong. In the end, I did my best, and people appreciate that I've taken the time to assess the situation.

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1. _____ *Could they give? Y/N*
2. _____ *Could they give? Y/N*
3. _____ *Could they give? Y/N*
4. _____ *Could they give? Y/N*
5. _____ *Could they give? Y/N*

For more assistance with how to ask for a donation, here are my top three tips: https://catholicfundraiser.net/how-to-ask-for-a-donation/

in Christ,

Brice

PS - I don't charge extra for typos. They're just my gift to you. If you do find any, please let me know by emailing me at brice@catholicfundraiser.net.

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